

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY DACCA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1637

INFO AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

AMEMBASSY RANGOON

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L DACCA 5408

LIMDIS

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

FROM CHARGE D'AFFAIRES

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EGEN, PDEV, PINT, PFOR, BG

SUBJECT: BANGLADESH TWO YEARS AFTER LIBERATION-US INTERESTS

REF: DACCA 5403, 5404, 5405, 5406, 5407

1. COUNTRY TEAM ASSESSMENT (REFTELS) IS GLOOMY INDEED. FOR THE SHORT RUN I AM NOT SO PESSIMISTIC AS MY MISSION COLLEAGUES, BUT THERE IS NO ESCAPING THE CONCLUSION THAT BANGLADESH IS FATED TO BE A PERMANENT DISASTER AREA, IN NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT TERMS.

2. WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS FOR THE U.S.? COMPASSION AND AN URGE TO MITIGATE THE MISERY BUT NO SPECIAL THREAT TO OUR STRATEGIC
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INTERESTS.

3. AS I ASSERTED LAST APRIL AT THE TEHRAN CHIEFS OF MISSION CONFERENCE, STABILITY OR INSTABILITY IN BANGLADESH MATTERS TO USG ONLY AS A FUNCTION OF GENERAL STABILITY OF SUBCONTINENT. INDIA, THE SOVIET UNION, AND THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA NO DOUBT DO THINK THEY HAVE STRATEGIC INTERESTS HERE. BANGLADESH THEREFORE IS NOT TOTALLY IRRELEVANT TO OUR GLOBAL CALCULATIONS BUT IT IS VERY CLOSE TO THE MARGIN.

4. WE RETURN THEN TO THE JUDGMENT THAT HERE IS ONE COUNTRY WHERE TRULY OUR ONLY INTEREST IS HUMANITARIAN. BANGLADESH NEEDS MORE OF ANYTHING AND EVERYTHING THAN WE CAN POSSIBLY PROVIDE. DECISIONS ABOUT OUR FUTURE AID TO BANGLADESH PROPERLY RELATE TO WHAT WE CAN SPARE FROM WORLD WIDE DEMANDS ON US AND ON BANGLADESH'S CAPACITY TO ABSORB OUR AID.

5. BENGALIEE LEADERS ARE BEGINNING TO UNDERSTAND THIS ALTHOUGH THEY WILL NOT DESIST ON OCCASION FROM TRYING TO PANIC US TO DO MORE THAN WE ARE INCLINED OR ABLE TO DO. THEY NOW KNOW THAT THEY ARE STANDING IN THE QUEUE WITH OTHER NEEDY NATIONS. THEY UNDERSTAND, AT LEAST INTELLECTUALLY, THAT A SPECIAL CASE CAN NO LONGER BE MADE FOR BANGLADESH.

6. ONE CONSEQUENCE OF THIS AWARENESS IS A BELATED AND RECENT INTEREST IN ATTRACTING AMERICAN PRIVATE CAPITAL INVESTMENT. THEY HAVE A LONG WAY TO GO TOWARD THIS GOAL. EMBASSY, OVERSEAS PRIVATE INVESTMENT CORPORATION, AND DEPARTMENT OFFICERS ARE QUIETLY AND, I HOPE, JUDICIOUSLY SHOWING THEM THE WAY.

7. PERHAPS IT IS NOT ENTIRELY COINCIDENCE THAT BENGALIEE LEADERS ARE ALSO SHOWING NEW INTEREST IN INCREASING CULTURAL EXCHANGES WITH USA. THERE IS A GENERAL YEARNING FOR MORE CONTACT WITH AMERICA AND AMERICANS. PRUDENCE DEMANDS THAT WE RESPOND CAUTIOUSLY.

8. BUT WE DO NEED TO RESPOND, LEST MUJIB AND OTHER PRAGMATISTS IN BDG CONCLUDE THAT USG HAS WRITTEN BANGLADESH OFF AS WORTHLESS. THE IMMINENT APPOINTMENT OF AN AMERICAN AMBASSADOR IS A SINE QUA NON. THE OTHER IS AN INVITATION TO PRIME MINISTER MUJIB TO VISIT THE US IN 1974. WITHOUT THOSE TWO GESTURES, MUJIB AND HIS COLLEAGUES ARE VULNERABLE TO RIDICULE. BENGALIEE RESENTMENT FOR OUR POSTURE IN CONFIDENTIAL

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1971 NO LONGER POSES OPERATIONAL PROBLEMS FOR US HERE, BUT BENGALIEES ARE NOT APT TO FORGET OR FORGIVE RIDICULE. WE DO NOT NEED TO LEAVE THEM IN THAT POSITION.

9. BEYOND THESE TWO FILLS TO BENGALIEE SELF-RESPECT, THERE IS NOTHING MORE THAT WE NEED CONSIDER DOING THAT IS NOT ALREADY INCORPORATED IN PROGRAM PLANS FOR 1974.

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